

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 068 596

UD 012 958

AUTHOR Watson, Bernard C.  
TITLE Survival, Phase II: Unity Without Uniformity.  
SPONS AGENCY National Urban League, Inc., New York, N.Y.  
PUB DATE Jul 72  
NOTE 39p.; paper prepared as an address to The National Urban League Coalition

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29  
DESCRIPTORS Black Community; Black Power; Bus Transportation; Community Control; Educational Change; \*Educational Finance; Equal Education; \*Higher Education; Negro Colleges; \*Negro Education; \*Political Issues; \*Public Schools; School Integration; Social Change; Tax Support

ABSTRACT

If blacks are to have any hope of success in producing favorable social and political change, they must be extremely wary of having too narrow a focus. Blacks cannot waste time in the search for ideological purity, closing out those who happen not to agree on every detail of a specific program. Blacks, together with the other oppressed groups of society, must recognize that the agenda is no less comprehensive than life itself. Education is the focus of this essay, but clearly there are myriad relationships between educational issues and those which are usually considered beyond the scope of a paper on education. Faced with the failure of the public schools and the concomitant continual hostility, insensitivity, or apathy, many blacks have decided that retreat and surrender or individualistic effort are the only courses open. Equal opportunity in education will not become a reality overnight--even if funding increases drastically, even if the busing question is equitably resolved, even if teacher training is improved, even if admission to college is guaranteed to all who wish to apply. Suffice it to say there is work to be done and work enough for everyone who seeks to forward the twin causes of quality and equality. [Parts of this document will not be clearly legible on reproduction due to the print quality of the original.] (Author/JM)

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SURVIVAL, PHASE II: UNITY WITHOUT UNIFORMITY

A Paper Prepared for the National Urban League

by

Bernard C. Watson  
Professor and Chairman  
Urban Education  
Temple University  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

July 1972

UD 012958

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## SURVIVAL, PHASE II: UNITY WITHOUT UNIFORMITY

For the past several years, in black communities across the country, there has been a good deal of rhetoric about black genocide. Depending upon the community or the persons who were talking, the genocide was either physical, educational or psychological. Simultaneously, in these same communities, significant voices were calling for "community control," "nation-building" and the development of plans for "black survival." It was--and for that matter still is--a time of turmoil and apprehension. Perhaps because of this it became a practice of too many to attach labels to almost every Black along the spectrum of ideology: revolutionary, militant, Uncle Tom, liberal, conservative, oreo, integrationist, Aunt Sarah, separatist, zebra, colored, Negro, ad infinitum. Ideological and philosophical battles involving the most minute distinctions, differences and nuances have consumed the brains, time and energy of some of the best minds in the black community. In its most bizarre manifestation, Blacks of acknowledged commitment, leadership ability and brains spent months opposing other Blacks with similar qualities over minor points of ideological difference. Less obvious, but no less debilitating, was the state of affairs where Blacks became immobilized as they looked inward and contemplated their navels, as it were, in agonizing attempts at introspection. The rhetoric of "blacker than thou," the ideological labeling, the withdrawal into a world of black fantasy are ultimately suicidal tactics. They distract attention from the very serious business of analyzing current developments which are inimical to the interests of Blacks and other minorities. They divert energy from the critical tasks of planning effective strategies to achieve equal rights for all minority citizens--and indeed to assure their very survival.

If Blacks are to have any hope of success in negotiating the troubled waters of conservative and racist reaction to the limited gains and small victories achieved in recent years, they must be extremely wary of having too narrow a focus. Limited vision, whether it concerns people or issues, is a very real danger. First, Blacks cannot waste time in the search for ideological purity, closing out brothers, sisters and potential allies who happen not to agree on every detail of a specific program. Even as dialogue continues in the hope of reaching consensus, options must be maintained for individuals to speak and act. In a crisis, every weapon, every vehicle, every tool must be pressed into service: the ragtag army may accomplish its goals, while the larger battalion waits, fearful of moving until it is sure of ideological uniformity. Second, Blacks, together with the other oppressed groups of society, must recognize that the agenda is no less comprehensive than life itself. Some issues may appear more urgent at some times than at others, but it would be a fatal mistake to see only individual trees and lose sight of the forest. It is not possible to discuss housing without considering employment, education in isolation from the political system, or health and welfare while disregarding the war. Education is the focus of this essay, but clearly there are endless and complex relationships between educational issues and those which are usually considered beyond the scope of a paper on education. It would be infinitely more comforting if one could, with a sense of optimism, address himself to the positive achievements and promising developments in the American educational system. Unfortunately, like too many other aspects of the society--housing, employment opportunities, transportation, health care--the public schools and much of post-high school education are in disarray.

### THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

It is not an overstatement to suggest that the public schools which are supposed to serve the poor of this country reek with the odor of failure, despair, apathy and violence, with the result that far too many of these schools, particularly in the rural south and the urban north, are suffocating and choking. The litany of problems is too familiar to require recounting here: drop-outs, gangs, functionally illiterate "graduates," drugs, the crushing of cheerful curiosity, the deadening of the ability and will to learn. Parents send their children to school with high hopes, but when, faced with the continual failure of their children, they ask the schools what is wrong, they are told to go home and mind their own business.

Confronted by continual hostility, insensitivity or apathy, many Blacks have decided that retreat and surrender are the only courses open: they will do what they can for their own children, but for all those others, there is no more energy or time. Others may be seduced by the analyses of scholars and social diagnosticians, the Jensens and the Shockleys, who indicate that not much can be expected from people who are genetically inferior.<sup>1</sup> Those who have a pious bent ask: Didn't Jesus himself say that the poor would always be with us? Still others just want to rest; they are tired of the struggle. There is a great temptation to stop banging collective heads against the stone wall and be content with limited gains for some, stagnation and despair for those who are at the bottom of the heap. Ultimately, it is a matter of choice, whether to continue in the struggle for human renewal and development or to go separate ways in the misguided belief that an individual can make it alone, that the hopes, destinies and survival of other Blacks is in no way related to one's own.

## FINANCE

Consider the financial crisis of the public schools. Those in large urban areas are approaching bankruptcy, if they are not bankrupt already. Along with so many other city services, the costs of education have moved well beyond the capacity of the municipal tax base--and the poor and powerless are once again caught in the squeeze. It is ironic, however, that providing an adequate education may well be, in the long run, far less costly than allowing the school systems to decay and disintegrate.

Dr. Henry Levin, a Stanford University professor, recently conducted a study for the Mondale Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, and the results should be given very wide public attention.<sup>2</sup> Using failure to complete high school as his definition of inadequate education, he calculated the costs to the nation in lost income and in increased need for welfare services and criminal rehabilitation. Taking only the males aged 25 to 34 in 1969 who had not graduated from high school, he determined that the nation lost \$237 billion dollars in income, and \$71 billion in government revenues. But to have seen this group through just a high school education would have cost only about \$40 billion.

Some very elementary arithmetic will indicate whether or not adequate financing of education is or is not a sound investment--even though no one has yet devised a way of measuring the differential in individual and social health. If an appeal to the American conscience does not produce results, perhaps the case can be made simply in terms of economics: scrimping on education is a dumb thing to do in terms of the Almighty Dollar. It must be noted, however, that calculations such as these and others, relating years of education to income received, are based on a rather important assumption:

namely, that jobs will in fact be available for all those who seek them. Yet, high unemployment is a continuing problem of the economy; racism still prevents many minority group members from obtaining positions for which they are qualified; technology is eliminating routine jobs; and serious questions are being raised about the basic orientation of the economy (e.g., toward war and against ecology). All these factors muddy the simple equation of schooling and careers, yet they must be taken into account by those whose chief concern is education. Clearly, as was indicated earlier, education cannot be viewed in isolation: it is inextricably involved with each item on the social agenda.

The traditional basis of support for public education--the local property tax--is, however, finally being given serious examination. The California decision in Serrano vs. Priest rejects the property tax as the main source of educational revenue because reliance upon the property tax dictates that the quality of the school system is a function of local wealth.<sup>3</sup> It is a violation of the equal protection clauses of the Constitution, ruled the judge in that case, when the quality of a child's education depends almost entirely on the economic health of the community in which he happens to reside. The implications of that decision for Blacks and other minorities are clear, since most live in poor communities. The implications were not lost on the affluent either, and there will be strong opposition to a departure from past practice.

But even if new formulas are devised for allocation of educational funds, will it necessarily mean a boon to Blacks and other minorities? Equalizing per pupil expenditures across a given state may be appealing at first glance,



but without careful calculation, the minorities and the poor may once again be shortchanged. Any formula has two parts: input is important, but there must be at least equal concern about output. If Blacks and other minorities are to be educated in a manner which will put them on a competitive basis with those from the wealthy suburbs, schools serving the poor and minorities may well require considerably higher allocations. As long as this society permits so many of its people to live in degrading circumstances, to suffer inadequate health services, to survive on the crumbs of a so-called culture which has systematically insulted and excluded them--as long as that situation continues (and there is little sign that massive reform of social conditions is imminent), then urban schools will have to be better staffed and equipped, more comprehensive than their suburban and affluent counterparts.

How can anyone in his right mind pretend that a youngster--no matter how attentive, how punctual, how well-behaved--who goes to a decaying school, is taught by inexperienced or hostile teachers, has no access to art or music or recreational facilities, has little or no example of encouragement to pursue a realistic career or college education--how can that youngster possibly compete? By the time he's out of elementary school, let alone high school, he's so far behind the starting line that it's ludicrous. Is that his fault? Is a racist society to continue in its comfortable illusion that it has had no hand in the screening out of minorities? Is it any wonder that so many Blacks and other minorities leave school before graduation? Graduation is no panacea, but in a credentialed society, a diploma opens doors.



The voucher plan is similarly a new development which, at first glance, shows promise of redressing some educational grievances. Unfortunately, it quickly shows fatal signs of having been conceived in the Utopian world of classical economics where the "invisible hand" will make sure that supply and demand balance neatly in a free marketplace. In the real world, unfortunately, things may not be so tidy. A family in North Philadelphia, in Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, or Lawndale in Chicago, may simply not be able to purchase with its voucher a quality of education even approximating what the affluent family in Scarsdale, New York or Winnetka, Illinois can buy. Voucher plans alone cannot make up for the years of neglect nor allow for the additional needs which poor, oppressed children bring to the schools.

It is important, then, to take careful note of the ferment surrounding educational finance, and to be as wary as ever of new proposals surfacing, whether for sources of revenue or for distribution. The value-added tax, for instance, which the President is contemplating as a stop-gap to avoid reform of the federal income tax, is a regressive tax which will be borne by consumers, not corporations. The Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations is supposed to be looking into ways to counteract the regressive nature of this tax, but past experience indicates that one should not accept administrative proposals on faith alone. Warden has pointed out that one interesting by-product of the current discussions of the VAT may well be removal of educational legislation from the traditional Senate and House committees to the far less sympathetic Ways and Means or Finance committees.<sup>4</sup>

## INNOVATIONS

For many concerned with the abysmal state of the public schools, hope seems to lie in one or another of the many new schemes for classroom or school reform. But frequently they pose more questions than answers. What about alternative schools? How does one distinguish among them? What evidence is there that they provide the skills and the education needed to allow Blacks and other minorities to determine their own future options? Even more important, what are the sources of funding or financial support for these alternatives? Must they always operate on "soft money," while the bulk of tax revenues continue to flow to schools which have demonstrated their inability to educate, even in the most rudimentary way? Will these alternatives become convenient dumping grounds and enclaves for students, mostly Blacks, whom existing public schools have neither the skills nor the inclination to deal with on a regular basis?

A critical danger is the possible use of poor black children as "guinea pigs," particularly when the experiment is really meant to alleviate the private hang-ups of a few individuals. Informal classrooms, for instance, are almost everywhere touted as the latest panacea for a host of educational woes. Like the little girl in the old nursery rhyme, when they are good, they are very, very good; but when they are bad, they are horrid. Informality, grooviness, and all the rest may become convenient covers for sloppiness and a general lowering standards. They mask the hard reality that nothing worthwhile, least of all a good education, is gained without discipline and hard work and while such innovations may in the short-run make schools happier places for some children, in the long run they may well

become a new form of patronizing put-down. These kids aren't really capable of serious effort, so make sure they have fun.

Arthur Pearl, in his excellent article on the new informalism which appeared in Social Policy about a year ago, punctures many of the balloons blown up by the informality advocates.<sup>5</sup> He does not deny that rigidity or irrelevance or coercion commonly characterize many public schools; but he cannot buy the prescription of those who would simply throw up their hands, turn schools over to kids, and abandon adult responsibility for leadership, guidance and teaching. The fact that some curricula are irrelevant, does not lead him, he says, to the conclusion that he cannot identify relevance and teach it. To quote Dr. Pearl: "There is a body of knowledge to be taught and a position to be taken through it, and supported by it, against parochialism, against poverty and misery."<sup>6</sup>

Equally damaging is the kind of rhetoric heard from some who try to persuade youth that some subjects are somehow foreign to black soul. Efforts to inculcate pride in black identity, to teach a more honest version of history, to recognize the drama and grandeur of the African past, are laudable and necessary as an antidote to years of dishonesty and racism and methodical suppression of ethnic identity and self-respect. But the needs of the black community for lawyers, doctors, engineers, planners, scientists and educators will not be met by young people, regardless of how committed they are to black development, who are not learning political science and chemistry and physics.

And finally, consider "de-schooling." What does that term mean to Blacks and other minorities? They have already been de-schooled, deprived, de-motivated and, too often, de-humanized by the existing educational system. They don't need another vehicle to do to them better what too many educational institutions have already done very well indeed through the years. Besides, this is a credentialed society, requiring diplomas, certificates, degrees and other stamps of approval to enter most of the more powerful and lucrative positions. While many of these credentials are meaningless in the more important ways or unnecessarily difficult to obtain, few can afford the luxury of ignoring them even while efforts to nullify them are intensified. Blacks and other minorities don't need to invent new ways to be kept out of the system; that has been done for them by others who were experts. They want in, not out. A more pragmatic way to attack the problem of non-education and inferior education is to force those institutions charged with the responsibility for educating to do just that: educate children and youth or get out of the way so others can get about their business. One should not be deceived by the new symbolic crusades. Eternal vigilance is essential if the poor and minorities are to avoid becoming victims of the diversions and blind alleys they have endured so long. White folks aren't about to pay for their education out of the goodness of their hearts. True educational equality should be argued and fought for, not as a favor or a sop, but as a sound investment in a healthy and viable society

When appropriate courses of study and methods and techniques for black students are being debated, it might be well to examine more closely the examples set by many black colleges. Through the years, these institutions--starved for funds, struggling for survival, besieged on all sides by hostile, racist whites who wanted to keep Blacks ignorant and uneducated--took the products of inferior, segregated southern and northern schools and turned them into competent professionals and outstanding leaders. One of the reasons Blacks have been able to develop leaders in many fields is because these institutions existed. Unfortunately, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Indians had no such institutions in this country.

An innovation which has received far less publicity than some others, however, is one with extremely dangerous implications: the use of drugs to control the behavior of children in the classroom. Nat Hentoff, writing in the Village Voice, has produced a frightening indictment of the collusion among drug companies, doctors employed by school systems, and teachers.<sup>7</sup> Although only about 100 pediatric psychiatrists in the country are qualified to diagnose and treat the minimal brain dysfunction known as hyperkinesis, for which certain drugs have, in fact, proved helpful, preliminary investigation has revealed that thousands of school children have been placed on a regime of behavior modification drugs, without proper testing, without careful monitoring, and often in total disregard of parental concern and opposition. It should not be necessary to point out that the victims are frequently children of the poor and the powerless. Hentoff comments. 'The so-called 'divergent behavior' is a desperate reaction to teachers and administrators who don't know what to do with kids who do not fall into their 'special ideology about discipline.' Unwilling to recognize their own deficiencies

as educators, these school personnel, in alliance with some physicians, turn to drugging children as the 'easy' way to solve their own problems in a classroom.<sup>8</sup>

The proposals for innovation, for reform, for change are apparently endless in their variety. Some may be well-intentioned, but poorly conceived and executed. Some may cost so much that they can reach at best only a minute proportion of the children who would benefit from them. Some, like the drug therapy described above, may be actually malevolent and harmful to children. As with schemes for reform of educational finance, wariness and careful analysis should precede endorsement.

#### POLITICS

Another subject we must examine carefully is the politics of schools and education. The educational system of any country is one of the primary means of socialization for its citizens. Any society will attempt to inculcate within its citizens the basic values, philosophy, beliefs and traditions of the society through its schools, along with other institutions.<sup>9</sup> Community control of the schools is inevitably, then, like other school-related problems, an issue which is political in nature.

Community control is a topic which has upset educators all over the country, largely because of the potential ramifications of the New York City controversy of several years ago. It might be pointed out in passing that here is another interesting example--like bussing--of American double-think. When whites demand community control, it is regarded as logical, normal and appropriate. In fact, they don't need to demand it,

because they have always had it! But once Blacks begin to talk about control, blood pressures sky-rocket, eyes bulge and people begin to see some dark and devious plot being concocted by militants and revolutionaries. Derrick Bell of Harvard University Law School has put the issue in proper perspective. "The essence of community control," Bell says, "is the sense of parents that they can and do influence policy-making in their children's school in ways beneficial to their children. Parents in highly regarded suburban school communities have this sense, and in varying degrees, teachers and administrators in those schools convey an understanding that their job success depends on satisfying not the board or union but the parents whose children are enrolled in the school."<sup>10</sup> Or as John Smith of Howard University said more succinctly: "White schools are not 'better' because whites are superior, but because those responsible are required to act responsibly."<sup>11</sup>

Community control is clearly an understandable and worthwhile item on the black educational agenda. The systematic favoritism for whites and planned inferiority for Blacks is too well documented to bear repeating. But when black parents, driven to desperation by the continued refusal or inability of white-controlled school systems to educate their youngsters, talked about taking over, the attempts to suppress or subvert community control began. In Detroit and New York, where state-mandated redistricting and local boards have been established, the results have not given disenfranchised Blacks much to cheer about. Marilyn Gittell, one of this country's major analysts of educational politics, sums up the problem by saying that "mere election of local boards is not a guarantee of a redistribution of power." She notes that professionals have seen to it



that boundaries and election procedures were such as to assure continued control by the old forces; that in any case organized groups—even those such as parochial parents with no direct interest in the public schools—are favored; and that local boards are limited to dealing with "at best minor housekeeping arrangements."<sup>12</sup> Barbara Sizemore's analysis of the Chicago Hullawn School leads to similar conclusions: there the community board was simply an advisory group, recommending policies, not controlling much of anything.<sup>13</sup>

The critical issue, of course, in any discussion of community control is the definition of control. Is control simply a meaningless term whereby the downtown administration can keep the slaves content, a formula without substance, a device for decentralization of systems too massive for coherent governance? Control should mean power, nasty as that word may be: power to make decisions about staff and curriculum, and to make those decisions stick. Control means money to implement new programs, build buildings, hire personnel. Without power, without money, control is a fraudulent, empty slogan. It is crucial to deal with reality, not rhetoric.

Philip Meranto, who has noted with interest the paucity of political analyses of school governance, concludes that the only hope for rejuvenating urban school systems lies in greater black representation in both legislative bodies and in school administration. "Only if blacks are at least moderately successful in winning these battles will the quality of education in American cities be measurably improved," he writes. "The immediate past has demonstrated that the quality of education available to groups in American society is not unrelated to the political power of the various groups."<sup>14</sup>

The fact that Blacks have already become a majority in many cities (if not in the general population, certainly in the school population) argues for operation of the school system for the benefit of black children. But merely because Blacks become a majority is no guarantee that things will improve. Financial support for basic services--education, transportation, welfare, housing--is slowly but surely being shifted from the local level to state and federal government. As Blacks and other minorities approach or become the majority in urban areas, gerrymandering of political boundaries and metropolitan schemes proliferate in transparent attempts to dilute or deny political representation, once again, to these historically disenfranchised and powerless groups. There are other developments occurring which may well undercut any kind of meaningful community control. In New York State, for instance, the NEA and UFT have united to form one monolithic teachers organization. If dealing with the union in New York City was an impossible task for local boards, how can Blacks and other minorities hope to negotiate and deal with a statewide organization of over 200,000 members.<sup>15</sup>

And it doesn't stop with teacher organizations. Increasingly there are calls for regional or interstate plans and programs--and no one can deny the need or good sense behind such appeals for transcending artificial boundaries. The problems of transportation or air pollution certainly do not respect political divisions. But what must be understood is that community control, in and of itself, may play itself out as another hoax on minority groups. Even assuming that they were able to get themselves together--organized, united, articulate--as a community or even city-wide group, what good would that do, if the action has moved to a higher level of

government or if the resources are so pitifully few that nothing much can be accomplished anyway. One may be promoted from clerk to president of the bank, but the plush office will be a meaningless symbol if all of the depositors have taken their money and gone elsewhere.

Blacks and other minorities all have a lot to learn from participation in the decision-making process. Competence in governance--no more than in any other field--does not come overnight, and it may well be as some, including Barbara Sizemore,<sup>16</sup> have argued, that Blacks are still at a stage in their development as a people where separatism is a healthy and necessary phenomenon. But they must beware of still another rip-off. The question of community control requires caution, and eyes wide open to see what is being controlled and what resources are available to make that control effective.

In the Brown decision of 1954, separate schools were declared inherently unequal. Documentation of the inequalities had been provided by Bond, Caliver and others.<sup>17</sup> Sexton and Wise,<sup>18</sup> among others, have shown that schools serving the poor outside the south also received an unequal share of the resources of all kinds. What happened after 1954, however, was that many people, both black and white, assumed that mixing black and white children in schools and classrooms would magically provide quality education. Few people confronted the hard realities of what quality education meant or would cost. Few dealt with the reality of racist teachers and administrators, rigid organizational arrangements, harsh disciplinary procedures unequally applied and the psychological violence

visited upon black children who would be bussed to newly desegregated schools. Segregated schools had proved damaging, but the pain and anger of desegregated schools has been no less damaging in too many cases.

Samuel Etheridge, the National Education Association's director for teacher rights, has documented and publicized the scandalous treatment of black teachers and principals in the South during this period of desegregation.<sup>19</sup> In the school year just past, Etheridge reports that 4207 black educators were dismissed, demoted, assigned out of field or unsatisfactorily placed in five southern states. Needless to say, the horror did not end there. Students have also suffered their share of the penalties. Literally thousands have been expelled, thrown out, physically brutalized and psychologically assaulted. A survey which covered less than ten per cent of all the school districts in the eleven Southern states uncovered these figures: 12,638 students suspended; 2,470 students arrested, and 22,978 students out of school for some reason or other, including expulsion. Intimidation, violence and even murder has attended the passing of the Southern way of life. And yet there are other instances in which young people of both races have been able, with wise and patient adult guidance, to explore their misconceptions and fears and frustrations together, and to move on to respect and friendship, putting their elders to shame.

The fact that black school children and teachers are being systematically repressed or impoverished is not news. But when such developments occur as the consequence of implementing a goal--desegregation or integration--for which people have fought and died, it is depressing and alarming in the extreme. That many Blacks have turned away from the unequal struggle

and begun to advocate separatism may be ironic, may seem a contradiction of much that has gone before, but it should hardly be viewed as a surprising development by the press or anyone else.

Black people didn't invent or create two separate societies. It was the Kerner Commission which noted that the ghetto was created, maintained and controlled by white society. It was the Kerner Commission which warned of a polarized society, separate and unequal.<sup>20</sup> What can one expect when oppressed Blacks and other minorities watch their children emerge from school uneducated, unequipped and psychologically damaged. Tracking, testing, counseling, and guidance contribute to this and are viewed as means of keeping black folks ignorant. Is it any wonder that people begin to say they will use any means necessary to see that their children are no longer dehumanized?

Yet understandable as these reactions may be, the focus must always be clearly on quality education. If that can be provided in desegregated or integrated schools, good. But--given the reality of housing patterns and the intransigent opposition to bussing--it may well have to be provided, for many youngsters in the foreseeable future, in all-black schools. In either case, the ultimate goal must continue to be a truly open society, an open society in which all people can choose from among many options. Blacks have been fighting for options for more than 300 years; hundreds of thousands have given their lives in the struggle. Whether Blacks want their children in desegregated or integrated schools, they must have that right. This country was built in no small part by the sweat, blood and brains of Blacks. It is as much their country as other

more favored groups, and they are entitled to all the rights, privileges and options available to the most favored of its citizens.

As Vernon Jordan and others have noted,<sup>21</sup> this period seems to be the end of the second reconstruction. The potential for violence and destruction which are building up in this country is no less than terrifying, not least because it is condoned, if not actually led, by the top executive leadership in the federal government. If the policies of this administration are not evil, they are at best stupid and shortsighted. This administration seems to have far more confidence than is warranted by history and the experience of human nature that "benign neglect" in racial conflict will somehow serve to appease white racists into a more broad-minded outlook. Apparently it has not yet learned that the quest for self-aggrandizement at the expense of other "inferior peoples" is an appetite which is never satisfied. Has the lesson of Nazi Germany been forgotten so quickly?

As early as February 1970<sup>22</sup> a top Presidential advisor was propounding the theory that the ship of integration had gone down and that the President would do well to disassociate himself, before it cost him more votes, from a struggle which was bound to fail. It seems obvious that he has taken that advice. Thousands of citizens, black and white alike, have agonized and worked toward the goal of equal opportunity, recognizing that their common safety and health--to say nothing of the moral and Constitutional obligation--required no less. Now they are confronted by the stunning and sorry spectacle of a leader who panders to the

worst elements in the individual or collective American mentality, and inflames racist and selfish desires or fears in a classically demagogic bid for re-election. The President has talked a great deal about honor in recent years, but it is extremely difficult to comprehend how he defines it. By submitting Constitutional safeguards to popular vote? Undercutting the duty of the Supreme Court to protect the Constitutional rights of minorities? Proposing legislation which would return this nation not simply to the thinking of Plessy vs. Ferguson, but even further back to the concept expressed in the Dred Scott decision: "... (Negroes are) altogether unfit to associate with the white race. . . and so far inferior they (have) no rights which the white man (is) bound to respect. . ."

The nation needs people who, in view of these disheartening and frightening developments, are committed to firm and vigilant pursuit of an open society, including the desegregation of the schools and the means to make desegregation possible. This is not to ignore the fact that many schools are now, and will continue to be, all or almost all black: the children in those schools cannot be penalized any longer for an accident of geography. But there are examples of excellent black schools from which to learn. The goal remains: a national educational system in which black and white and indeed all children will learn from one another, and in spite of one another, what life in a world of diversity and change is all about.



## HIGHER EDUCATION

Equally serious problems face Blacks who wish to obtain undergraduate, graduate or professional training. But first, the topic of higher education for blacks should be placed in historical perspective: For many years, of course, black colleges comprised virtually the sole means for Blacks intent on obtaining post-secondary education. Indeed, as late as 1968, almost 80% of the baccalaureate degrees awarded black students were granted by black colleges, and almost 50% of the graduate or professional degrees.<sup>23</sup> Earl McGrath emphasizes, in the initial pages of his study of Negro colleges, that if young black people are "to receive any higher education, the institutions now primarily serving Negroes must, for a considerable span of years, provide it."<sup>24</sup>

People may argue, as they do, about whether these colleges were founded to assist newly freed blacks assume their rightful role in a free society or to reinforce segregation and subservience. The fact remains that black colleges have performed heroically in providing education for generations of black people and that they have done so in the face of overwhelming odds against their very survival. To this day, they have been starved for funds—and have, therefore, had poor facilities and low salaries. They have had to engage in enormous amounts of remedial work because many of their students came from schools organized around planned inferiority and academic deprivation. And make no mistake about it: it was planned, overtly in the dual school system in the South and covertly in the ghettos of the North. The deliberate design has been alluded to and documented by such diverse writers as Ambrose Caliver, Horace Mann Bond, Henry Allen Bullock

and in the monumental work of Gunnar Myrdal.<sup>25</sup> Dubois, again the visionary, said years ago that:

The Negro Race, like all races, is going to be served by its exceptional men....Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers, but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men.<sup>26</sup>

But most whites, especially the philanthropists, were not interested in the training of "men" and thus a tragic cycle was initiated.

Students in black colleges and even the alumni have rarely been in a position to support them, through high tuitions or generous bequests. Financial weakness in the colleges and lack of demand for trained Blacks in a segregated and discriminatory society combined to limit their offerings to "safe" fields, like education, social work and religion. Even the few professional schools were limited to providing training for those careers which could be pursued in the black community: medicine, law, theology. The tragic cycle was repeated over and over: ambitious young Blacks had no opportunity to study advanced science or business administration, and the white graduate schools or employers were provided with an easy "out" for their lack of black students or employees. But regardless of their crushing problems, black colleges did and continue to provide the vast majority of educated black leaders. From their alumni have come not only the well-known spokesmen for the whole spectrum of black consciousness, but also the quiet supporters for the thousand-and-one projects and programs attempting to gain freedom, opportunity and power for black people.

Look at what black institutions have done, for instance, in providing professional training. Now it is quite clear that Blacks are still under-represented in all the higher professions. For instance, only two percent of this country's practicing physicians are black. The proportion of attorneys is extremely unequal: one for every 750 whites, but only one black attorney for every 5,000 blacks. The story is similar for other post-baccalaureate programs: only 1.72 percent of graduate enrollment is black, and of all the Ph.D.'s granted between 1964 and 1968, only .78 percent went to Blacks. But without Meharry and Howard, the record would be unimaginably worse. These two are still providing the vast majority of black doctors and dentists. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education reports that "in 1968-69, out of 35,000 M.D. candidates in the nation, 393 were at Howard and 269 at Meharry. Less than 1 percent of the students in other medical schools were black...out of 15,403 dental students enrolled, 136 were at Meharry and 310 were at Howard. Only 21 of the 59 dental schools, other than Howard and Meharry, had any black students, and most of these had only one."<sup>27</sup> Despite the fact that these figures are beyond dispute, at a recent social event one of the affluent white "liberals" present refused to accept their validity. He offered no refutation other than his contention they were inaccurate! He could not accept the fact that in the 1970's black institutions were still carrying the major burden of providing black professionals in law, medicine and dentistry, not to mention basic undergraduate education for Blacks.

While the gallant efforts and real successes of the black colleges in the past should be appreciated and receive endorsement, it must be noted that the desegregation gradually taking place in higher education has its price. For instance, the integration of institutions which were formerly predominantly black poses the danger of reducing rather than expanding access of black youth to higher education. The Carnegie Commission says this, for instance:

Among historically black colleges, three recently reported that more than 50 percent of their students were white: Bluefield State College, 69 percent white; West Virginia State College: 73.3 percent white; and Lincoln University, Missouri, 50.8 percent white."<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, Maryland State College became part of the University of Maryland, and nine predominantly Negro junior colleges in Florida were closed in order to integrate their students into white junior colleges. Before one can determine whether these integration efforts represent advancement of the black cause, he should inquire what happened to the black young people who might have gone to Bluefield State or to Lincoln University, Missouri. Were opportunities available to them in predominantly white colleges?

The "black brain drain" is another cause for concern. The scrambling by many sectors of society for black students and professionals is certainly a refreshing change: but one must guard against satisfaction with mere tokenism. The recruitment of topnotch students or professors from black colleges to white ones may represent a net loss, not gain. The installation of a Black as a special assistant in an otherwise white office is too frequently window-dressing at best, and at worst may

serve as an excuse for avoiding the need for basic institutional change to meet the needs of the black community. The days for basking in the reflected glory of the achievements of one or two have long since gone: opportunity must be available to every one.

As recently as 1969, more than six per cent of the white population (25 years or older) had graduated from college, as opposed to only three percent of the Blacks. More than half the white population of this country had at least a high school diploma, but less than one third of the black population had graduated from high school.<sup>29</sup> Has there been an improvement in this situation? It's hard to say. Figures on current enrollment of Blacks in colleges and universities vary from a high of 484,000 reported (1970) by the Census Bureau to a low of 356,836, reported by the HEW Office of Civil Rights. One can only speculate about the disputed 125,000 bodies. Indeed, Elias Blake, in his paper prepared for the National Policy Conference on Education for Blacks last April, states, "Despite all the publicity on increases, no studies of any comprehensive nature exist with solid answers to these questions..."<sup>30</sup> (i.e., of how many blacks are enrolled, in what kind of programs, leading to what). Equally mystifying is the exact proportion of black youngsters in predominantly black colleges or in predominantly white, be they private or state-supported. The Southern Education Reporting Service conducted a survey of the 100 state universities and land-grant colleges, and found that (with the exception of these institutions which were originally all black) the percentage of black students ranged from a high of not quite 3% in institutions in the Midwest to a low of less than 1½ in the Far West.<sup>31</sup>

It is not just mathematical inaptitude that makes one suspicious of figures: it is the all-too-common phenomenon of non-existent, scrappy or inconsistent data which, in this age of computers, is hard to understand or excuse. But of course it should not be necessary to note that even if there were an accurate clear picture of black student enrollment, one would still need to ask the even more important questions about quality and productivity.

The efforts of some colleges and universities to expand access to higher education to minority youth have been lauded by a few, but they have triggered anxiety and outright opposition among many more, including the Vice President. The late Whitney Young, Jr. and Eamon Hogan provided an excellent response to those who, "when they grumble about 'lower standards' are really using code terms for keeping blacks out." They write: "...it has been clearly demonstrated that now traditional terms of admission predict little or nothing about what a minority student will do in college or about his potential after graduation. At the same time, it has been clearly shown that lack of motivation is not a problem where genuine opportunity exists; academic skills can be acquired; and persons once thought uneducable at the college level, based on high school records, College Board test scores, and cut-off points, are now succeeding in their studies....The best way of determining whether a potential student is capable of college work is to admit him to college and evaluate his performance there."<sup>32</sup>



Open admissions, like so many other highly publicized new programs, cannot be regarded as the solution to the disproportionate representation of minorities and the poor in higher education. Indeed, some serious questions must be raised about certain programs which permit students to enter but do not provide the supportive services, counseling, remediation or financial backing which will make it possible for them to remain. Similarly, the proliferating community colleges must be carefully watched to see whether, as has been charged by some,<sup>33</sup> they are in part becoming a convenient device to screen out applicants for the universities and direct them into lower-status and even dead-end jobs.

The enormous expense of a college education is well-known, and cost alone will continue to bar the college door to many aspiring poor youngsters whose families are totally unequipped to help them. It is doubtful that, even with the emergence of new Federal aid to higher education, this country has yet made a commitment to ensuring that all its talented young people, regardless of their social or economic circumstances, will have an opportunity to engage in advanced study.

Even if adequate financial support were assured, very serious problems remain. The pressures on black students, particularly on the recently desegregated campuses, are extremely severe. Too many black youngsters, unfortunately, are confused, misled, and finally demoralized by self-proclaimed leaders who subsist on an ideology or program based on half-truths and a single strategy. Trying frantically to get their bearings, these youngsters have few opportunities to obtain sympathetic and sane advice and examples, and they fall prey to fools and charlatans. One



black college president tells of looking out his window late one night to see one of his better students tearing up the grass on the college green. When the student was invited in and asked what he was doing, he replied: "I'm planting food to feed all the hungry brothers and sisters." Whether that particular trip was caused by drugs or something else is beside the point. What matters is that some of the brightest young people today are being bombarded with false information, conflicting theories and misleading signals without any corresponding method for evaluating them or sorting them out.

A very disturbing development on some predominantly white campuses is the establishment of special colleges for open admissions students, Blacks, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans. These colleges are separate, identifiable and often run by Blacks and other minorities. But if these colleges become the repositories for all of the disenfranchised and oppressed, what of their future? How much money will be available for them when Blacks, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans go out of style? What about the responsibility of existing departments and colleges to change their staffing patterns and curricula? Permitting or encouraging such separatism may become a part of the new racism: give them their thing and let them do it; we will be done with them, and good riddance. If quality is not established and maintained, if staff is not competent and committed, if skills and education are not directed to careers of the future, Blacks and other minorities will soon realize that they have been had, put in a trick bag once again, and ripped off in the name of progress.

Art Thomas, Director of the Center for the Study of Student Rights and Responsibilities, summed up the challenge facing Blacks concerned about young people. "Black people have to realize," he said, "that one white dude can come into an audience of 2,000 black people and act like he's in the majority. That's a very powerful thing, when a white racist society has conditioned a white dude to believe he is superior, to act like he's in the majority even when he's in the minority. Black people, if we are going to survive, have to develop within our children the belief that they are beautiful, that they are brilliant, and that they can do anything they make up their minds to do. If we can educate our children at an early age to believe in themselves, the question of integration or separatism will not be important because of black pride. When you can put one black child in a school with one thousand white children, and he knows he is powerful, that he is brilliant, then the thousand white children will not affect his confidence. By the same token, you can have one thousand black students in a school together who live, trust, and respect each other, and they will know that they are together and can accomplish anything they set out to accomplish."<sup>34</sup>

Learning how to deal with overt and covert racism may be depressing, frustrating and difficult in the extreme. But it is an essential part of the educational experience for all minority young people. If they are to deal effectively with whites in later life, as they must, they might as well begin on the campuses. They cannot do so by retreating to the illusory havens promised by separate courses of study, dormitories or other exclusive minority programs. Harold Cruse, that perceptive and biting

critic of the black intelligentsia, lays bare the hollowness of much of the separatist rhetoric. "The Negro intellectual," he writes, "must deal intimately with the white power structure and cultural apparatus, and the inner realities of the black world at one and the same time....he cannot be absolutely separated from either the black or white world."<sup>35</sup> Calling on radical Blacks to develop "a social theory based on the living ingredients of Afro-American history,"<sup>36</sup> he accuses them of disdaining profound theoretical and scientific examination of historical facts in favor of "passion, emotionalism and prejudice."<sup>37</sup> But while they are caught up in this fervor, he warns, the white power structure will be busy doing their theory and practice for them.<sup>38</sup>

Even earlier, W.E.B. DuBois had defined the black situation: "Once and for all," he wrote, "let us realize that we are Americans, that we were brought here with the earliest settlers and that the very sort of civilization from which we came made the complete absorption of Western modes and customs imperative if we were to survive at all; in brief, there is nothing so indigenous, so completely 'made in America' as we."<sup>39</sup> And Inamu Baraka, still known to many as Leroi Jones, adds: "The paradox of the Negro experience in America is that it is a separate experience but inseparable from the complete fabric of American life....In a sense, history for the Negro before America must remain an emotional abstraction."<sup>40</sup> Such words are sobering but much-needed as restraints to those who are tempted, however understandably, to escape into an all-black world.

Education is a complex topic: almost every issue raised in these few brief pages---and many others to which no reference has been made here---could well become the sole topic of an article, a chapter, even a book. Exactly because of this complexity, it is always tempting to put on blinders, to focus too narrowly on an immediate problem, to ignore the annoying ramifications of events in tangential fields. But simplistic analysis, simplistic solutions, will not do. Equal opportunity in education will not become a reality overnight---even if funding increases drastically, even if the housing question is equitably resolved, even if teacher training is improved, even if admission to college is guaranteed to all who wish to apply. Suffice it to say there is work to be done, and work enough for everyone who seeks to forward the twin causes of quality and equality.

Peter Drucker has some astute comments on the current educational crisis: "The school is not in crises just because it is suddenly doing worse. Today's school does no poorer a job than it did yesterday; the school has simply done a terribly poor job all along. But what we tolerated in the past we no longer can tolerate....Rather the school has suddenly assumed such importance for the individual, for the community, for the economy, and for society, that we cannot suffer the traditional, time-honored incompetence of the educational system....Today, access to careers, to most opportunities, and to education is through the school. We expect of the school---and it is a new expectation that no school has met before---that most if not all students will really learn something....We expect a person to find in school his basic experiences and the knowledge foundation for his life....(we) depend on the diploma, so we rightly demand that the schools perform better."<sup>41</sup> But the clouds of racism and reaction

to earlier gains are gathering and loom ominously over any discussion about improving education. Those who have read Sam Yette's book, The Choice,<sup>12</sup> whether they agree with him or not, will have some notion of the possible dimensions of the storm. What, for instance, of recent judicial decisions, such as the Supreme Court's action in permitting juries to reach majority, rather than unanimous verdicts in cases tried in state courts? Or its upholding of the rights of private clubs to maintain restrictive practices, even while they operate under liquor licenses granted by the state? What of the psychologists and others who suggest reconsideration of theories of genetic inferiority or predict an increasing role for an elite meritocracy? What of the social analysts who depict the "pathological" condition of the black family, or intimate that a certain segment of society is destined (one can almost hear "predestined") to remain in squalor or ignorance? What of the consolidation of power by organizations who oppose participation by the less powerful, who care nothing for the views of poor or minority groups and communities? None of these developments is irrelevant to the concerns of those who wish to improve education and increase opportunity.

Yet first on the educational agenda must always be the definition and redefinition of what is meant by "quality." Faddists and hucksters are ever eager to sell panaceas, to advocate the substitution of "pop" Shakespeare for the genuine article, to substitute grooviness for hard work and discipline (or, as someone has felicitously put it, to "grant absolution even where none was sought"). There is no substitute for exposure to the riches of the past--not only the African or the Spanish past, but the entire range of thinkers and civilizations. Only thus will



the young be instructed in their human potential, even while they learn to moderate the arrogant pretensions of so much of modern ideology. Good education depends, too, on exposure to adults--not simply teachers, but many adults who will counsel, encourage, advocate--adults who provide models of commitment and of integrity by living out in their own lives what they presume to teach young people. And quality education demands the provision of many options, alternatives and choices. It is--or should be--well known by now that learning is a life-long process which varies in rate and style from one individual to another. Yet one unfortunate consequence of universalizing education has been the equation of learning with school, as well as the subjugation of natural curiosity and interest to "professionally" defined standards of progress and behavior and attitude in the classroom.

Despite the confusion, dislocation and turbulent change which will continue to impede the halting progress of this society toward realization of its dream, there is some hope. The current liberation movements--black, female or youth--may prove capable of liberating everyone from the bitter residue of past failure and present fear. The demands, for instance, being made by many Blacks--for quality education, for accountability by teachers, for full funding, for desegregation--are not narrow and self-serving. They are needed by all segments of society, and all segments of society--rich, poor, black, white--will benefit if they are met. But it will not be easy, in a time of bitterness and frustration, to remember to convince others that the cause belongs to everyone. The most important things for Blacks to remember is that the struggle is about survival as

human beings. In these difficult days and in the more difficult tomorrows, the temptation to strike out at each other for perceived differences in tactics and strategy will bear heavily upon them. It is imperative that they resist and actively oppose such tendencies in themselves and in others. Neither pointless violence nor abject surrender will serve, nor will idolizing or romanticizing of black leaders.

"Malcolm X," writes a perceptive member of the Institute of the Black World, "became in his lifetime the quintessence of a free man....If we are serious about the fundamental personal and structural changes which are necessary for black people to live, then we cannot fail to take Malcolm as our model. In saying that, we are not focusing here on a specific political methodology for change. Malcolm is the prime example of what we must do if we want to prepare ourselves, not only for the struggle for freedom, but for the possibilities inherent in freedom itself. Malcolm's crucial decision, as a member of an oppressed people, was to refuse to accept the limitations imposed on him by the conditions of oppression....The willingness to expose one's life to the merciless glare of truth and to make whatever changes truth demands,...this is the epitome of a truly religious, truly political man. This was Malcolm, and it must be us."<sup>43</sup>

Blacks are a humane and loving people, they care about each other. Were this not so they would have long since perished under the weight of over three hundred years of oppression. Their ability to continue to struggle has been sustained by their basic humanity, their ability to remain humane through centuries of physical and psychological violence.



As that humanity has sustained them so they must now zealously nurture and continue to develop it. Blacks -- like other minority groups -- do not have to agree on everything, nor should they expect agreement on all things. Unity, not uniformity must be the goal. They cannot make the fatal mistake of adopting the attitudes and behavior of their oppressors. Name calling and labeling have little place in the struggle; they must look at one another in terms of what each is doing to advance the program of black survival and development. If the brother or sister is on the case, moving the agenda forward, right on! If they are not, they can be helped to join the struggle: there is a role for everyone in the struggle for survival. There really is no viable choice in this regard: the survival and development of each black man and woman are intimately, inextricably and inevitably linked to the fortunes of all black people, and ultimately to the fortune of the human race.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Berkeley professor Arthur R. Jensen's article, "How Much Can We Boost I.Q. and Achievement?," which touched off a continuing storm of controversy, appeared in the Harvard Educational Review, Summer 1969. William Shockley, a 1956 Nobel Prize winner and Stanford professor, is the author of "Dysgenics, Geneticity, Raceology: A Challenge to the Intellectual Responsibility of Educators," Phi Delta Kappan, January 1972.
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4. Memorandum to Ruby Martin, dated February 7, 1972, prepared by Richard Warden of the Washington Action Research Council for the National Policy Conference on Education for Blacks.
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12. Marilyn Gittell, Statement to the Mondale Committee (Equal Educational Opportunity), July 14, 1971.
13. Barbara Sizemore, Statement to the Mondale Committee, July 27, 1971.
14. Philip Meranto, School Politics in the Metropolis (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1970), pp. 157-8.
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16. Barbara Sizemore, "Is There a Case for Separate Schools?" Phi Delta Kappan, January 1972.
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